



Kate Ericson
Executive Director
LEARN
44 Hatchetts Hill Road
Old Lyme, CT 06371

February 17, 2022

RE: Magnet School Funding

Dear Senator Osten, Representative Nolan, and Honorable Members of the Appropriations Committee,

LEARN is the Regional Educational Service Center (RESC) in southeastern Connecticut. I have the privilege of leading the agency, along with its 4 magnet schools in the southeastern Connecticut corner of the state and 2 partnership magnet schools in East Hartford. As the Executive Director of LEARN, I am asking for adequate funding for magnet schools to keep pace with program-cost increases, and to ensure the 13,000 students enrolled in RESC-operated magnet schools continue to have high-quality, integrated, public school options for their education.

In the 1990s, Connecticut's 6 RESCs formed the RESC Alliance to create greater access to resources and savings for all Connecticut public schools. The RESC Alliance works as one to improve outcomes for all Connecticut students. For RESCs to continue demonstrating substantial cost savings to the state and its public schools, funding is needed. Please enact an 8% increase for RESC operated magnet schools to sustain CT's high-quality, integrated, public magnet schools of choice.

Magnet schools are the single, largest form of public-school choice in this country. The roots of magnet programs date back to the Civil Rights Movement in the United States. The schools attract children of various socio-economic backgrounds, races, and academic achievement levels. Magnet schools close the achievement gap, provide high-quality and equitable education environments, improve racial harmony, and increase student achievement by optimizing all students' ability to reach their potential. The regional nature of the schools reduces racial, ethnic, and economic isolation of our youngest citizens and young adults. However, over 10 years, ECS increased by 13% while the RESC magnet grant increased by a mere 2%. If these public schools of choice are to remain viable options for students, offering high-quality, integrated experience for a child's education, the schools require reliable funding from the state. A 2% increase in 10 years is not sustainable for any model of education.

LEARN has a history of championing public school choice for Connecticut's students. We remain committed to ensuring that every child has access and opportunity. The future we see for magnet schools of choice and the students benefiting from these integrated experiences is not bright if adequate funding is not provided. Please do not take away access and opportunity for our children.

Your consideration of this important request is appreciated. I hope our school districts, families, children, and young adults can look forward to the state financially supporting high-quality, integrated, public school experiences for all students.

Sincerely,

Kate Ericson
Executive Director, LEARN